The Black Cat

October 1903

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The Cruiser and the Juggernaut.*

BY PHILIP LORING ALLEN.

THE insult which Lieutenant Baumgarten of the Imperial German Navy had offered to Lieutenant Desjardins of the French "Corps des Automobiles" could only be wiped out in blood. It all began in a dispute as to the efficiency of motor carriages and of torpedo boats in warfare, but the talk soon assumed a more personal aspect.

"My people, ze French," said Desjardins, "fight onlee for ze Glory. But look at you Doochmans, you Hessians. Ze Germans fight for money, while ze Frenchman fight for ze Glory!"

"Sure," said Baumgarten. "Dey each fights for de tings dey needs most."

The court of honor discussed the bearings of the case for three whole hours. Then it decided that, inasmuch as the quarrel concerned the utility of the services which the two officers so ably represented, it was but fair that they should put their pretensions directly to the test. Strictly speaking, therefore, Desjardins should make his attack in an automobile, and Baumgarten in a torpedo boat. It being obviously impracticable for either combatant to borrow government property for the purpose, especially as both

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were attachés on the neutral soil of Spain, the Court modified somewhat these rigorous conditions. A hired motor-car and a hired launch should take the places of the war chariot and the fighting ship. As to armament, the brass saluting cannon used on yachts were the nearest things obtainable. Incidentally, these would greatly reduce the possibilities of carnage. The little man at the gun shop would load 12-gauge shells with round lead balls and ask no questions.

When they heard this decision, both the principals laughed grimly. It was absurd to lay such stress on the purely military aspects of their disagreement. If the outbreak had not come in a tactical dispute, it was bound to come somehow, possibly in a discussion of the comparative deliciousness of Camembert and Limburger. For each man realized that his dislike for the other was but the natural accompaniment of his love for the Lady Laura, the niece of the British Ambassador. If he could have evoked a gleam of pity, or of something better, from her beautiful blue eyes, either would cheerfully have submitted to being carved into the most ghastly fragments, had they not felt that this would be the very worst way to make an impression. Already they had tried almost everything they could think of. Baumgarten, the naval officer, felt that he had a slight advantage through having chosen the same field in which so much of England's glory had been won. The Frenchman, on the other hand, had to rely upon the fascination of the unfamiliar. As for language, they had been a little handicapped at first, but they polished up their English assiduously, and used it for practice on every possible occasion. In fact, they talked English exclusively when in one another's company, and each took a savage pleasure in the thought that his rival was unwillingly helping him to become proficient in the tongue of his inamorata. They felt now that victory in a contest which was a combination of a regatta and a road race would be particularly acceptable to sport-loving English eyes. And let it be said that these two young men were not of the spirit that suffers and endures in silence. They took pains that the lady should learn, though not from their lips, of course, all about the affair of the morrow. Her little maid, Watkins, with francs and marks clinking together in her purse, told them how the tidings had been received. And it

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only need be said that the Frenchman went to his lodgings with a heart that bounded and throbbed like one of his own motors, while the German had only the grim hope that, with his rival out of the way for good and all, he might start afresh and win the lady's affection after all.

It was one of the conditions of the duel that neither man should make preliminary trial of his weapons. So, long before daylight, each one was nervously fingering the mechanism of his improvised howitzer and greatly wondering what manner of execution it would do. The machinery of their hastily procured conveyances was, moreover, almost as strange to them.

Imagine two fish-hooks placed near together but not in contact, back to back. Let one of these represent the border of a little lake, and the other a country road, and you have a rough plan of the scene of action. Starting from the points where the two fish lines would be attached, Baumgarten in his launch and Desjardins in his motor-car were to approach each other at sunrise, along the shanks of the hooks, as it were, until they were but an eighth of a mile apart. Then a turn of the road and an outward sweep of the shore (the bend of the hooks) would compel them to separate. If both came from the onset unscathed, it was agreed that they should go back to their stations and repeat it.

Baumgarten pushed a top-heavy paper shell into the breech of his cannon and levelled the muzzle at the point where, beyond a two-mile stretch of marshy meadow land, the white road emerged from a group of trees. As he did so, he glanced over his shoulder and saw that the tiniest fraction of the sun's disk had come above the hill-top. He picked up the lanyard.

Just at the moment a scurrying black thing shot out from behind the trees, with a cloud of steam behind it. Simultaneously, he started the launch and fired. So far as he could see, the shot landed nowhere at all. With his left hand on the wheel, steering the boat in an even curve close to the shore, he reloaded with his right and fired again. This time he saw the ball strike with a splash in the marsh only half a mile away. The car was still a mile beyond the range of his clumsy weapon. He let half a minute pass before he fired again. His swift launch and the car, both puffing and pounding frantically, were rushing obliquely toward each

other. Baumgarten lifted the muzzle of his piece as far as it would go and fired, to gauge the distance. At the third shot his bullet kicked up dust right in the middle of the road, and he chuckled. Desjardins was approaching that very spot. It was distracting to have to steer with one hand and manipulate a piece of ordnance with the other, but he kept on firing as fast as he could open and close the breech-block. The car was within easy range now, and once he placed a shot so close that the dust it raised mingled with the steam from the motor. Closer and closer they swept. They had almost reached the turn, and still not a shot had come from the car. Why was this? Baumgarten did not interrupt his bombardment to consider, but he thought he understood. The Frenchman was planning to stop suddenly at the bend and take him at a disadvantage by firing from a standstill. He must be ready to forestall that plan the instant the car stopped.

He got down low in the boat and levelled his eye along the sights. Just as he was ready to fire, there came a shock. In his effort to aim more accurately, he had forgotten to steer, and the boat had stuck fast in the reedy bank. His frenzied pull at the reversing lever did not dislodge the craft and he had no time to get out and push it off. "I'm stationary, at least," he thought, and applied himself again to the cannon, firing furiously, but at first without result or response. Then there came a sharp report from the machine. He had forecasted his enemy's tactics. The car was certainly slowing up, for Desjardins's better aim.

Baumgarten sighted along the barrel, coaxed it ever so little toward the left with an almost caressing movement, and then jerked the lanyard. Where the car had been, there appeared at that instant a white cloud. Steam from severed pipes enveloped it, and black smoke followed in an instant, as naphtha from the tank leaked to the woodwork and caught fire.

The victor surveyed the wreck calmly. His honor was vindicated. And just then a most unpleasant sound made him turn his head. Unmistakably it was the buzz of a flying bullet not ten feet from his ear. He heard a report, and a second shot whizzed over him. Coming full speed down the road was another motor car, lower and blacker than the first, and every few seconds there was a flash and a crack and a splash of water in the lake. "Mein

Gott, wer hab ich geschlagen?" screamed Baumgarten and jumped precipitately overboard into the shallow water. Wildly he floundered through the marsh grass, toward the road, and as he went he fumbled for his handkerchief and, finding it, waved the white rag as a flag of truce. At this spectacle, Desjardins pulled back the lever and stopped short. Then he saw the column of smoke in the road ahead, jumped down and ran as fast as he could to the succor of the unfortunate chauffeur. It did not occur to him that he could get there more quickly by riding.

When he was a hundred yards away and Baumgarten two hundred, the fuel tank of the burning machine blew up with a roar, and the whole roadway seemed to be afire. Both men groaned with horror, but kept on running. "The man is now dead, whoever he may be," they said to themselves.

Then Desjardins fell sprawling, and as he picked himself up, looked to see what he had tripped over. It was a foot, a most diminutive foot in a tan leather boot, and he saw that it belonged to a young woman who was lying with her head and shoulders in the roadside ditch. Shouting wildly to Baumgarten, he carried the prostrate form to the soft grass, and with his cap began to dash water on the already dripping face, the features of which were concealed by a visor and goggles which had not become dislodged even in the explosion.

Suddenly the Frenchman stopped still, as a great idea took possession of him. "Baumgarten, Baumgarten," he shouted. "Et ees ze Lady Laura. For love of me she haf taken my place. She love me so mooch she take herself ze bullets zat ware meant for me. Oh, my belofed!"

The rapturous kiss which the lieutenant immediately bestowed upon his "belofed" was more efficacious than his previous efforts at resuscitation. She gasped once or twice, and then sat up suddenly and fumbled with the fastenings of her cap. Baumgarten stood by, knee deep in the mud, and looking as if the sky had fallen on him. This person, at whom he had been directing his cannonade, was plastered with mud from head to foot, and the face was disguised by the automobile toggery, but as far as height and age and general proportions went, it might very well be — indeed it surely was — the Lady Laura.

"I knew it would explode," said a girl's clear voice, at last. "So I ran as far as I could. And then I tripped and fell into the ditch and fainted. I'm all right now, I guess. But tell me, do you always attack strangers in this way? Don't you realize that the war with America is over?"

"America!" exclaimed the men.

"Certainly, I'm an American," said the girl, still struggling to unfasten her visor. "I think you're likely to hear about that through my father, the consul. What on earth were you trying to do, anyhow?" This question came as she saw the armed motor car in the road, and the white launch, with its gleaming cannon, aground at the edge of the lake.

"Didn't you fired at me too," said Baumgarten, in a puzzled way, finding it still necessary to talk English. "I heard de shot at least vonce."

"Blew out a valve, that was all," said the consul's daughter, looking ruefully at the smoking ruin. "And now, won't you take me home in the armed cruiser or the Juggernaut?"

Baumgarten, without being invited, climbed into the rear seat of the uninjured automobile, and the three started back to the city. Half way in, a messenger on horseback shouted to them to stop. "Lieutenant Desjardins?" he asked, with a courtly bow. "And Lieutenant Baumgarten? It was not my hope to find you together. From the Lady Laura."

The two men tore open the little envelopes he handed to them. After reading the first four lines, Desjardins started the machine with a vicious jerk.

"I might as vell tell you," said Baumgarten solemnly, after a long pause, "dat dis letter is a invitation to the vedding of de lady we vos fighting about. She is going to be marriet to vun Spanish man."

"Zis one ees ze same," said Desjardins.

A Close Shave.*

BY GEORGE E. MILES.

OW am I going to get a shave to-night?" said Barker, the upper classman. "That's what I'd like to know. I can't shave myself; that's certain." His companions laughed.

"You'll have to learn how," said one.

"Not on your life," retorted the handsome blond young fellow, "unless the governor stops sending me my allowance."

"Well, then," rejoined his fellow student, "go to the theatre as you are and tell your girl that you are starting a beard. She certainly won't know it unless you do tell her," he added.

At this juncture a pale-faced, black-haired youth, who was sitting somewhat apart from the others, and who had been nervously clasping and unclasping the arms of his chair, spoke up:

"I can shave you if you want me to."

Barker looked around gratefully. All the others smiled. It was Files, of course. For some unaccountable reason Files had voluntarily become "fag" for Barker, who liked it, because, as he would remark, "it is so English, you know, to have a 'fag' to order around." To everybody else in the College "Barker's Dog," as Files was called behind his back, had become an object of mild derision. Nobody found Files congenial, nobody could half understand him; still less could they explain the President's solicitude about him and his frequent inquiries, either of Files himself or of his classmates, as to how he was getting along.

Barker grinned and accepted the service. Going up to his room with Files, he improvised a barber's chair, stretched himself out in it luxuriously, threw his head well back, glancing first at the mirror to admire in an inoffensive way the curly moustache and fair skin of which he was secretly rather vain, and told Files to "go ahead and begin his butchering."

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The keen edge of the razor slid rapidly and noiselessly over the ridiculously smooth surface of Barker's neck, while the young fellow looked up curiously at the black eyes so close to his, which had a gleam of amusement in them, as Barker interpreted it; for Files was laughing under his breath, yet so forcibly as to make his hand shake a little.

"Files," said Barker, "you're a peach!"

The silent laughter of the other continued.

"Say, Files," continued Barker, "do you really like this sort of thing — shaving a fellow and — and all that? What are you laughing at anyway? I don't see anything to laugh at — unless," he added as an afterthought, "it be your own name."

Here Barker laughed himself.

"Who the deuce gave you such a Christian, or, rather, *un*christian name as *Razzin?* It isn't American or English. It isn't French or German or Italian. It's Oriental. That's what it is. Arabic, or something of that sort. *Razzin Files.* Damned if it doesn't make one think of an old tool-chest, with broken scroll-saws, pieces of wire, bits of leather and black dust at the bottom."

He laughed aloud at the thought. Files irrelevantly pulled out of his pocket a letter, remarking briefly:

"I found it on the floor just outside the President's office to-day. Read it."

"Why," exclaimed Barker, taking the letter, "it is addressed to him. What are *you* doing with it?"

"It is from my mother. Read it!" was the persistent response.

Barker began reading, pausing for a moment to caution Files about the razor, the keen edge of which Files was allowing to press, though ever so slightly, against his neck, irritating him unaccountably. The letter began:

> MY DEAR DOCTOR: I have just received a letter from Razzin which worries me a little. As you know, he was discharged from the insane asylum entirely cured of his melancholia, but I have felt ever since a great anxiety about him which this letter of his increases. You so kindly assured me that you would keep him under your eye and see that he was not overworked or overstrained mentally, that I have had great hopes of his going through the course without a recurrence of the dreadful symptoms which caused us such acute misery. Certain expressions in his last letter, however, have made me very uneasy ——

Barker interrupted his reading to stare at the dark face bending over him and to repeat his injunction to hold the razor away from his neck.

"Damn it!" he angrily muttered; "you don't need to get your face so close just because you are shaving a fellow."

"I want to see the white skin better," said Files with a smile which exasperated Barker, who lifted his arm to push away the hand that held the irritating steel.

Files's manner suddenly changed in a way that paralyzed Barker, whose wrist was caught firmly, turned inward under the arm of the chair none too gently, and held firmly by the "fag."

"Don't move!" commanded the latter roughly — "the razor might hurt you."

Barker instantly became quiet. Something unusual had suddenly crossed his mind and he felt a choking in his throat which prostrated his energies. There was an expression in the glittering eyes that he had never seen before, and the smile which accompanied it completed his demoralization.

"You see it," said Files with a hard and mirthless laugh.

"See what?" Barker managed to utter.

"You see it in my eyes! You know what it means!" and there appeared in the black orbs a look which haunted Barker for many a month afterward. He had never seen an insane man. He had never seen murder incarnate in the human eye, but he recognized it now and could not utter a word for the beating of his heart.

"Do you know," said Files, with a confidential air, "what a strange affinity there is between shining, beautiful hard steel and white, soft flesh? For God's sake, don't get pale that way; it only makes your skin whiter!"

He was no longer looking at Barker's ashy face but at his neck, against which the razor blade still pressed.

"Don't move your other hand!" he commanded again. "It will be the signal! Oh! what a beautiful skin!" he muttered in a sort of ecstacy. "It is like white velvet, soft and smooth. A white velvet robe and a crimson scarf! The blood is waiting to burst through and make the scarf." His hand shook violently.

Barker was no coward. It was all over with him, as he thought, but with a superhuman effort he steadied himself.

"Say, Files," said he, quietly. "You think it's the bright red and soft white that are so attractive, but it isn't anything of the kind. The most delightful sensation is to feel the warm blood flowing over your own skin, not somebody else's. Did you ever try it?"

"No," said Files, dully; "it hurts too much."

"No, it doesn't. You simply draw the razor across your own throat enough to start a few drops. You know what the professor said yesterday about pain and pleasure being akin. It is the tickling small pain which creates the intense thrill of delight."

Slowly the poor maniac lifted the razor and carried it doubtfully towards his own throat as if to try the suggestion. It was a supreme chance, and Barker leaped upward, catching the arm of the mad student before he could recover from his surprise. A great gush of blood flooded Barker's face, blinding his eyes; for in his effort to escape he had unwittingly forced the sharp blade across the throat of Files, cutting it from ear to ear. Ere Barker could wriggle entirely out of his chair the madman had fallen on him, tearing ferociously at his throat with his teeth. The struggle was over in a moment and when the door was thrown open by an excited crowd attracted by the noise both men lay inert upon the floor, one of them dead.

When Barker recovered from his swoon and told the story of his dreadful experience he was believed and justified by all; but he has never been able to quite satisfy his conscience on a single point connected with his "close shave," as he calls it, with poorly-assumed lightness: "Was he morally responsible for the tragedy that cost the life of Razzin Files because of that last suggestion he made to him?" It is a query that constantly recurs to him and disturbs his dreams.

Meantime Barker has learned to shave himself.

Cap'n Penfield's Pinks.*

BY ALICE BROWN.

EZRA TIMMINS stood out in the road talking to Angeline Pratt. The talk was confidential and his attitude betrayed it, as he moved a little nearer and looked up into her face. He even laid a hand upon her arm, and that his daughter, Jane Ann, noted from her post behind the blinds. The two standing there in the road were an oddly matched pair. Angeline was tall and rather magnificent in poise, with a head held nobly. Even her plain calico dress, and her hair coiled without ostentation, could not detract from this natural charm. Old Timmins, a fiery wisp of nerve and sinew, with a fringing whisker and large blue eyes, had worked himself into a confidential fury.

"An' don't ye say nothin'," he urged, at the moment of laying his hand upon her sleeve. "Don't ye open yer head. I like to finish up them kind o' jobs and no questions asked. Jane Ann'll be tickled to death. You mark my words. On'y when anybody's tryin' to do anything, it's nothin' but talk, talk, talk. Ye get sick o' talk."

"Well," said Angeline, slowly, in her meditative voice, "I'll make up my mind."

"So do!" called Ezra, in the act of turning away from her. "You make up your mind."

That his daughter heard, and ejaculated "My soul!" from her vantage ground. Then she watched the parting, her father's alert, somewhat triumphant nod and Angeline's thoughtful attitude. Ezra came absently toward the house, and she met him at the door. His cheeks were flushed a little; his eyes were brightened, and he chuckled briefly to himself. But on the threshold, where

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $500 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

Jane Ann confronted him, he stopped with a little jerk and immediately seemed to wither into lower stature, while the light faded out of his face.

"Oh," said he, weakly, "that you, Jane Ann?"

"Now, father," said Jane Ann, in an extremity of impatience, "who should you think it was? You hold on a minute an' let me get the broom. Hangin' 'round the road till your feet are all caked over! My soul! I should think you'd ground 'em into the dirt!"

She seized the broom as if it were a weapon, and administered a brushing that looked like castigation. She was strangely like her father in a way betraying no inward likeness at all. Of the same size and facial contour, nature had yet added some aggressiveness to her outline, so that, as they stood there together, she seemed to represent an active principle, some kinship wherein he was only passive.

"There!" said she, desisting, flushed with the vigor of her onslaught, "you come in now. I want you to set a spell an' git cool." She returned the broom to its nail, and then placed herself before him as he sat by the window. Ezra took out his handkerchief, and wiped his head in embarrassment, until the thin, dry hair stood ludicrously erect. Jane Ann stood regarding him for a moment, and then took a chair by the other front window. "Father," said she, ominously, "what's Angeline Pratt been sayin' of?"

Ezra started, in evident guilt. Then he recovered himself.

"I dunno's anything," he responded, mildly.

"You dunno's anything? You've been talkin' out there in the ro'd under everybody's face an' eyes, for twenty-five minutes by the clock, an' you dunno's she said anything! Father, I should think you was possessed!"

"Well," said Ezra, falling into the meekness which is more exasperating than revolt, "I dunno but I be."

"But what she say?" pursued Jane Ann, with an intensity not to be ignored. "Father, what does make you keep so close?"

Ezra was aware that he wanted nothing more than secrecy, and he looked his guilt. But the consciousness made him a little fractious.

"Now, what you want to talk like that for?" he asked peevishly. "Who's keepin' anything from you?"

"You be, father!" Her eyes narrowed and bent themselves on his. "An' I know what it is. Father, do you remember how long poor mother's be'n dead? It's two year and three days."

"Yes, I do, Jane Ann, I remember all about it. Well, what then?"

"Nuthin'! On'y when you've begun to run after Angeline Pratt, an' holler after her to think it over, so't anybody can hear it way in here, — father, I should think you'd feel pretty small!"

Ezra started up from his chair, and fumbled for his hat. His hands were trembling. His mouth worked a little. But Jane Ann was the last person to guess whether he was moved by guilt or anger. She was used to raising whirlwinds without realizing very keenly what damage they did. Her father had taken his hesitating way toward the door. He always had the air of avoiding something as he walked about the room, when Jane Ann was present. After he had been in the house with her for an hour, he seemed even timorous of the tables and chairs.

"Father, where you goin'?" Her husband, in such exigencies, was wont to grow destructive, in a way threatening the household furnishings; but it never occurred to her that her father could be tried beyond his strength. Now he made no answer.

"Father!" said Jane Ann, taking a step toward the door, where he was hesitating, "you tell me where you're goin'. You ain't creepin' off down to Angeline Pratt's?"

Ezra turned and faced her.

"I'm goin'," said he, in some extremity of revolt, "over to t'other house an' set a spell."

"T'other house" was his old home, a little cottage beside this, where he and his wife had lived together for many years. Now it stood, orderly yet untenanted, a refuge for him, where he could smoke his pipe and muse over other days. Sometimes, indeed, Jane Ann swooped down upon him, and so raged over his tobacco that he would hide the pipe, only to return to it for another blissful hour and its dark penalties.

"I'll come over in a minute an' brush up a mite," said she, and then her father looked at her. He felt beset. Sometimes he was

even afraid that, as his harried mind expressed it, he should do Jane Ann a mischief.

"Well, ye won't find me there," said he. "I ain't a-goin'."

"You ain't? Where be you goin'?"

"I'm goin' up to the buryin' ground an' mow the lot. I 'spose I can do that without bein' follered up!"

"Well! I must say!" remarked Jane Ann, and she watched him while he plodded off to the barn after his scythe, and then took the road leading safely away from Angeline Pratt's. Then she turned with a free mind to her baking. No matrimonial snares could await him at her mother's grave.

Ezra went absently up the road toward the old burying-ground. His eyes were wet with tears. He stumbled once or twice. It hardly seemed to pay to lift his feet in a world so full of exasperating circumstances. The only thing he knew very clearly about his daughter was that she had dyspepsia, and that his wife had been wont to go about sighing "Poor creatur'!" on days like this. But his wife had stood in the gap between him and his alien offspring, and now she was gone, and there was no one to protect him any more. He felt entirely unfriended in a world meant only for the young. So he went into the little tangled burying-ground and sought out his own lot, not divided from its neighbors by any visible signs, but held in the memory of generation to generation. There, as he stood in dull reverie, leaning on his scythe, he became aware of a figure bent in strenuous effort in a neighboring lot. It was the Widow Penfield. Ezra stood and regarded her for several seconds, before she saw him. She was pleasing to the eye, with her smooth brown hair and rounded cheeks, not yet faded from their bloom. Just now they were deeply flushed with the effort of stabbing her trowel into the turf and bringing it up again in a fruitless fashion. Ezra laid down his scythe and pottered over to her.

"Look here, Mis' Penfield," he said, kindly, "you gimme that trowel. Mebbe I can kinder loosen the earth for ye, if that's what ye want."

Martha Penfield looked up and smiled at him in a neighborly way. She was only five or six years younger than he, and she had known trouble, yet she seemed to him miraculously young.

"I kinder wanted to set out some pinks," she explained. "But I don't seem to make much headway, an' that's a fact."

Ezra took her trowel and essayed the task; but he, too, forbore.

"You can't git anywheres with this," he said. "'Taint much better'n a teaspoon. See here! You leave it today, an' tomorrer I'll come up an' spade it over for ye. Where you want the pinks to set? Right here close to the stone?"

"You're real good," said the widow. "I hate to trouble you, but I ain't got any menfolks to turn to, now. Yes, I thought I'd have the whole top here set over with pinks. He was terrible fond of 'em."

Her eyes filled with tears, and she evidently forgot Ezra, save as one vaguely concerned in her trouble through a kindred misery.

Ezra followed her glance to the headstone, and he read the date.

"Sho!" said he, meditatively. "Six year ago! I didn't know the Cap'n 'd been gone so long as that!"

"It seems a good many times six to me," said the widow, crying a little. "Mebbe you think it's queer I never set out any flowers before. You see, I kinder liked the grass; but this year it come over me I wanted to do some little thing for him, more to take up my mind than anything else. But you know how 'tis, Mr. Timmins. You've lost, too."

"Yes," said Ezra, mournfully, "I've lost as good a woman as ever drew the breath o' life."

"I never see much o' Mis' Timmins," said the widow, with the air of admitting her to the conversation, "livin' over t'other side o' the river as we did, an' she keepin' so close to home. But I was always pleased when we did meet. Do you think your daughter favors her?"

"No!" returned Ezra, bitterly. "She don't. My daughter don't favor anybody but herself." There he stopped, in some vague trouble at his own betrayal. They were both sitting now, he on Grandsir Eastman's grave and she on Aunt Susan's, and as they talked, they tidied the spot absently, pulling a weed here and there. Martha Penfield even smoothed the turf with her hand, as if she loved it. Yet she was not thinking of the dead at that moment, only of Ezra Timmins. She knew all about the petty tyranny of Jane Ann. It was an old subject of common talk that

her husband, Josh Moxom, became a peddler to escape the crises of domestic life. The town knew also that Jane Ann was goaded by visions of a stepmother, and that she goaded her father in turn. But the widow never harped on unpleasant themes.

"So you're livin' with Jane Ann?" said she, with a cheerfulness proportionate to his need.

"I dunno whether I'm livin' anywheres or whether I'm on'y stayin'." The words rushed forth unbidden. For the two years of his bereavement he had not opened his poor heart to human friendliness, and now it would be heard. "Jane Ann's house is terrible small, so I stay there nights when Josh is off on the cart; but when he comes home, I sleep over t' the old place. But that ain't big enough for three, and I've thought some o' buyin' a place where we can all live together."

"Do tell!"

"Yes," pursued Ezra quite happily, like a child who has at last found a sympathetic mate to enjoy his form of game. "Angeline Pratt thinks some of goin' out West to jine her brother. I've got the refusal of her place. Don't ye say one word. Jane Ann don't know it. I'm sick to death o' talk."

"That's a proper big house," said the widow warmly. "Convenient too! The kitchen's on the south side. Well, you can't say but that's big enough for three of ye. I expect Josh'd give up peddlin' an' come home for good?"

"I dunno," said Ezra, with sudden gloom. "That's what I had in mind when I talked with Angeline Pratt; but I dunno." In the light of his last encounter with Jane Ann, he had no very sanguine belief in the possibility of peace, even in a larger house.

The day went softly on about them. It was June, and the woods on the upper heights were thick with leaves. Everywhere there was the smell of earth and the pungency of bark and root. Their talk flowed quietly, touching often upon the dead, but as if the dead were living. At that moment the two felt neither grief nor loss, because an according sympathy made all things one. It seemed not long before a shadow cleared off the headstone, in a way that Widow Penfield knew. She had been here many a noon in sorrowful musing and seen it fleet away, and she did not need the twelve trembling strokes from the old church tower.

"It's twelve o'clock!" she said, rising hastily. "I dunno what's become o' the day." Then, as Ezra rose, too, with some difficulty, she smiled at him and said, "I guess we're both on us a little stiff. We're gittin' on in years."

Ezra watched her down the path, and remembered what a pretty girl she had been when he and his wife were courting.

"She's a good woman, too," he said aloud, "a real good woman."

He was a little late at the dinner table, and Jane Ann, parcelling out greens before him, asked him briskly, "Got the lot done?"

"No!" said Ezra. He began upon his dinner with great appetite. Something had stirred the air about him and fanned his life to quickened flame. "No. I left the scythe up there."

That night, after the late moon had risen, Ezra got up from his bed where he had been lying dressed, and stole downstairs and out at the back door. He went softly round the house to Jane Ann's window, and listened there. She was breathing regularly, and at the sound his own breath came again. Then he stepped along the path across the orchard to his shed, and got out the spade and wheelbarrow. In a rich corner of the garden he set the barrow down, and began pulling up his early corn. When a spot was clear, he set his spade into the good rich earth, and heaped his barrow with it. For the first time in years he felt the joy of living. He was doing something far from his accustomed groove, and it brought the scent and echo of a bygone youth, when even common things were half unproven. Some slight peril attended his way, for if Jane Ann should, for any reason, seek him in his chamber, she would not rest until she found him. With the fatalism of the hunted, he knew Jane Ann would prove invincible. But he piled his barrow high, stuck his spade into the earth, and went wheeling away out of the yard and up the hill. No one was abroad. Only the moon and he were awake in the June splendor. The intermittent creaking of his wheelbarrow made alarming clamor in the air, out of all proportion to its loudness. It was a steep pull to the little graveyard on the hill, and twice he stopped to breathe and mop his dripping face. Confidence returned to him in the deeper stillness there, and when he set down his barrow by the side of Cap'n Penfield's grave he was a resolute man. In

some mysterious way he felt companioned by the friendly dead. His wife had always stood by him. She seemed to be standing by him still. So he fell to and began spading up the turf where Martha Penfield meant to set the pinks. A little wind sprang up and kept him cool at his task. It brought him the scent of the locusts on the hill, and he thought of their dewy clusters as he worked, and the honey he had sucked from them when he was a boy. He whistled a little, a minor psalm tune, befitting the place; and so, presently, in a heat of friendly toil, it was all done. The rich earth was shovelled upon the grave and banked there evenly. Cap'n Penfield would have his pinks.

Then Ezra sat down upon the wheelbarrow and meditated. His thoughts flowed in a tranquillity like that about him. Suddenly it seemed to him a very good and kindly world, though a certain friendliness had gone out of it. Yet at that moment he could not believe it had gone at all; some strange, satisfying memory of it stayed and built desire into hope. And when the dawn was chill about him, he went down the hill again, put his wheelbarrow away, and stole safely up to bed.

He was late at breakfast, and Jane Ann looked keenly at him.

"Mercy, father!" said she, "you goin' to be sick? You're kinder feverish. How do you feel?"

"Same as usual, I guess."

"Well, you better keep pretty close," said Jane Ann, pouring his tea, and thinking of Angeline Pratt. "This sun's hot enough for the middle o' summer."

Ezra set down his saucer with a trembling hand. He could not look at her, but his voice rang stoutly:

"I'm goin' up to the buryin' ground. I ain't finished up."

"Well," said Jane Ann, tentatively, and he was safe.

When the Widow Penfield came toiling up the slope with her basket of roots, Ezra was mowing the grass in his own lot. He gave her a friendly nod, and she set her basket down at the side of the grave. At the same instant she gave one inclusive glance at his work of the night before, and came toward him, both hands outstretched and tears upon her cheeks.

"Oh, you good creatur'!" said she. "I never see anything like that, — never in my born days!"

Ezra held her hands for a moment, and then dropped them because he hardly knew what else to do.

"There, there!" said he huskily, "you go set out your pinks."

The widow went, wiping her eyes with the back of a capable hand, and Ezra, mowing his grass, felt a great softness for all created things. It was very pleasant to know she was there working almost at his side. There seemed to be a curious community of interests about it.

"Dear creatur's!" he said aloud. Then it occurred to him that he was thinking of his wife and the widow also, and it seemed to him a puzzling world. But he went on mowing, and the scent of the June grass filled the air.

"There!" said the widow presently, standing off to regard her work, "it's as pretty a bed as ever I see. Before summer's over, it'll be a mat o' green."

"It's gettin' along pretty late for settin' out. Better water 'em in the cool o' the day!"

"Oh, yes!" said the widow, "I'll keep 'em nice and wet."

She turned away, thinking chiefly of his good-will, and not quite knowing how to tell him so. Ezra felt a curious desire to keep her. He took an eager step or two.

"Say, Mis' Penfield," he implored.

She stopped, but he had nothing else to add.

"It's goin' to be a real nice day," remarked the widow. "I thought, one spell, 'twould cloud over; but on'y look how bright it is. I wish't I'd brought up some newspapers to shade them pinks till they get wonted."

Ezra was grateful to her for talking about common things. He hardly knew what other things he wanted to talk about, though it seemed as if there must be many. But when she turned away again, he spoke hastily:

"Marthy Penfield, I s'pose you think everything's over and done with, when a man's as old as I be!"

The widow looked at him in a genial kindliness.

"Some things may be over," she said gently. "Some ain't. You have just as good a time as you can!"

Ezra amazed himself because he seemed suddenly to be pleading a cause which, until now, had not existed. Something came flood-

ing upon him, after the repression of these two years, to tell him he was victim of a great injustice under Jane Ann's rule. The June earth seemed still to be his, and tears burned his aching eyes. He looked down at his hand, strong yet in spite of its knotted ugliness. It was not an old hand. It still had power to grasp and hold. With a motion of unconsidered dignity he pointed to his wife's grave.

"There's nothin' on earth could make me believe she wanted me to be thorned to death," he said. "She'd be the last one —"

His voice failed him, and the widow, too, looked as if she were going to cry.

"I guess I'll go," said she, tremulously. "You were real good about the pinks. I shan't forget it."

Then she took up her basket again, and hurried down the walk. Ezra did not look after her. He stood gazing in a dazed fashion at the clover where he stood. Life, he saw, was never done, until one lay down under the grass. There speculation failed him, and, with some fierceness of new energy, he too went down the path and came back with newspapers for sheltering tents over the pinks on Cap'n Penfield's grave.

At twilight that day, Ezra, the milking done, sat down upon the front doorstone to think, and there he grew uneasy. Presently he rose and sauntered down the path. It was borne in upon him that up in the burying ground the Widow Penfield was watering the pinks, and he was in haste because there was much to say to her, though of what nature he could not tell.

"Father," called Jane Ann, "where you goin' ?"

Her chores were finished, and she stood in the front door, immaculate in her chocolate calico, and morally invincible. His old acquiescence returned upon him. He halted in the path, and answered weakly:

"I'm goin' up to the buryin' ground."

"You wait a minute," said Jane Ann. "I'll go too."

Ezra's feet seemed turning to stone upon the walk. Then a new cunning was born of his necessity, and when Jane Ann came forth, her shawl over her head, he was nowhere to be found.

"Father !" she called, but no one answered. She looked up the road, and down the road. There he was, walking toward

Angeline Pratt's. Jane Ann sped afar. He went but slowly, and she overtook him on a crest of rising ground.

"Father," she said, breathlessly, "where you goin' ?"

"I dunno exactly," returned Ezra, with a calmness half defiance.

"Well, if you're goin' down to Angeline Pratt's I'm goin' with ye, that's all."

Ezra stopped, and though he spoke with a studied gentleness, his voice held some new meaning not quite familiar to Jane Ann.

"Then," said he, "I ain't goin' anywheres."

He turned about, and Jane Ann followed. She was amazed. Up to this moment he had never once questioned her rule, and now he had, in a measure, turned against her. She sat in silence with him while the dusk fell and the whip-poor-will came forth, and when the stillness bore too heavily, she said, in spite of herself:

"Father, I dunno what's got into you !"

But Ezra rose without answering, took his candle and went up to bed. Triumphal pulses beat within him. He had never pictured himself as rebelling, even through guile; but new companionship had made him stronger. His wife was standing by him, mysteriously translated through a living woman's sympathy.

The next day was Sunday, and Ezra walked to church with his daughter. Once or twice in the service he wondered if Martha Penfield were in her pew, and when they arose to face the singers in the last hymn, it was some queer comfort to see her shiny silken back and her neat braids of hair. Ezra sang loud and tunefully. His daughter glanced up at him once or twice, as if to bid him stay his voice. Jane Ann could not sing, and not knowing whether her father did it well or ill, she always had some hesitation in encouraging what might be a too youthful effervescence. As soon as the benediction had been pronounced, the Widow Penfield hurried away, though others were clustering about the minister in a feudal group. Jane Ann was there, and Angeline Pratt. Ezra looked at Angeline in the light of his daughter's apprehensions, and found her comely. For some reason he compared her with Martha Penfield. He smiled to himself satirically, and at that moment Angeline looked at him. Her eyes were darker than usual, her face less calm.

"I be'n hopin' to see you," she said in a rapid undertone. "I've made up my mind. I'm goin'."

"You be?"

"Yes. I want to hurry right off."

She paused, and Sunday though it was, Ezra knew the next word lay with him.

"Will ye do it?" he asked, and Angeline nodded.

Ezra spoke rapidly, for Jane Ann's eye was upon him.

"You meet me tomorrer at ten, in Squire Nudd's office. Don't ye say one word."

"Father!" Jane Ann was calling. Ezra followed her unspoken will and turned away from Angeline to the minister's outstretched hand. He had erred — so said his gentle soul — but a something within him made transgression sweet.

"Father!" said Jane Ann, as they were walking home together, "Everybody's talking about Mis' Penfield's pinks. She's got the Cap'n's grave all set over with 'em. What if we should try some? Her lot's so near, it'll cast ourn into the shade."

"You let the lot be," said Ezra gruffly. "I ain't got the weeds out on't yet."

Jane Ann stole a look at him, and Ezra frowned. He wondered how other men managed to make themselves respected.

It was on Wednesday that he slipped away while Jane Ann was straining the milk, and hurried up to the burying-ground. There she was, the Widow Penfield, trim and comely, watering the Cap'n's pinks. She greeted him with a comfortable smile, and then glanced over at her plants with the air of introducing them to their benefactor. But Ezra could not choose his words. He almost heard Jane Ann behind him.

"Marthy Penfield," said he, beseechingly, "What if you should set up housekeepin' with me in the old Pratt house? I've got the deed on't here in my pocket. It's yourn. Everything I've got in the world is yourn. You come, Marthy. I'll be real good to ye."

Mrs. Penfield set down the watering pot and looked blankly first at Ezra and then at the pinks. She was trying to read into their blue-green leaves some measure of reproach, as if they spoke for Cap'n Penfield there below. But she could find none. All she could do was to say "There! there! You mustn't say such things as that."

"But you will, Marthy!" urged Ezra. "You got to. We could have a real good time livin' along together. Them two——" he gave a comprehensive sweep of his arm, as if he included their unseen guardians in the talk, "they'd be the last to begrutch it."

The widow looked very pretty, a little pale, and pathetically moist about the eyes. But she glanced again at the pinks, and they decided her.

"I can't, Mr. Timmins," she said, firmly. "No, I can't!" and she took up her neat skirts and went hastily down the hill, leaving the watering pot behind her.

Ezra sat down and regarded it, but not altogether mournfully. Some strange obstinacy was springing up within him. It was not hope; it was rather a new belief in the mutability of circumstance.

That night when he went in to bed, Jane Ann was very gracious.

"Folks say Angeline Pratt's goin' out West to live," said she. "Goin' to start right off!"

Ezra made no reply, and Jane Ann, with some compassion for him as a rejected lover, sponged bread that he might have rolls for breakfast.

The next night and the next Ezra kept his tryst in the burying ground, but Martha Penfield was no longer there. Yet the watering pot was gone, and the pinks were flourishing. She had been there, at least. But on the third morning Ezra was on the spot at eight o'clock and he saw her coming up the hill. He stood behind the old Price monument, and Martha Penfield, when he stepped out before her, gave a little cry. Ezra lost no time.

"Marthy," said he, "I ain't a-goin' to take no for an answer. You come along o' me. We'll be terrible snug in the old Pratt house. I've bought it right out, furniture an' all. You come."

"No!" said the widow, with the air of one who has deliberated. "I can't. I don't feel to change my state."

"Don't ye think I'd do well by ye?" he queried anxiously.

"It ain't that," replied the widow, tremulous at last. "It would be you if 'twas anybody; but as for second marriages, I never had much opinion of 'em——"

Ezra looked sorrowfully into the distance. Then his gaze fled back again, and it was full of horror. He had seen Jane Ann.

She was plodding up the hill, bearing a basket of plants. He seized the widow's arm.

"Look a-here!" he breathed. "She's comin'! Jane Ann! Let her once set eyes on ye an' I might as well be dead an' in my grave. I can't change a word with ye without payin' for it ten times over. You slip down t'other path with me, and we'll run into Parson True's. We can be married afore she sets her eyes on us. Marthy, you come!"

"The idea!" said the widow, bridling a little. "Haste makes waste, Mr. Timmins. There's got to be a license."

"Here 'tis, right in my pocket," said Ezra, trembling. Jane Ann was half way up the path. She had stopped to rest, and turned, in the doing, to regard the view below. "I got it when I went to town to meet Angeline an' settle up about the house. I didn't know how long 'twould be afore I could git away agin. Marthy, you come."

Martha giggled.

"Hurry up, then," said she.

They took hands like children and scurried down the path.

Jane Ann, toiling up the hill, heard the pattering of their flight and glanced across the intervening grave. At first she hardly believed those keen, quick eyes of hers. Yet she knew the wiry figure, the scanty coat, hitched up a little in the back, the threadbare overalls.

"Father!" she called involuntarily, but the pair fled on.

"Father!" cried Jane Ann. "Marthy Penfield! Father!"

She set down her basket, and fled after them, down the grassy path, across the little gully where the spring flows at the foot and into the dusty road. There sat her father and Martha Penfield in the butcher's wagon, driving down the hill. They had "caught a ride," and their very backs were clothed with triumph.

Jane Ann sank upon the roadside, her hand upon her heart.

"My soul!" she groaned, and then again, "My soul! The Widder Penfield!"

The Backsliding of Yakob Mueller.*

BY LIDA E. CRANSTON.

THE truck patch lay before him as he stood in his cabin door, and the last low rays of the setting sun showed Yakob Mueller the weedy rows of onions, cabbages and potatoes. He hitched up his overalls with a weary sigh and moved slowly indoors to cook his lonely supper. All day he had toiled with pickaxe and grubbing hoe till his body was almost as bent and twisted as the roots of the giant firs he labored to unearth, and now, after he had eaten his fried bacon, sauerkraut and potatoes, he must work on far into the twilight to free his cabbages from the choking weeds, else there would be no kraut for the next winter's barrel.

Yakob Mueller was slow of thought and motion, and it was more from instinct than any formulated reason that, after he had hung up his frying pan and pushed back the rough stool that served him for a chair, he once more thrust his tired arms into his jumper sleeves and went out into the evening. He had crept on hands and knees through all the onions and freed half the cabbages from the weeds that clung to them with more than brotherly tenacity before he really thought that he was working for next winter's kraut barrel.

When this idea became clear to him, it gave a new zest to his labor and, spurred on by the thought of pleasurable eating to come, he became almost nimble. Before long the newly risen moon showed so large a space of clean-growing vegetables that he rose, straightened out his stiffened joints and stumped heavily into the cabin. There he lit his lantern, drew up his stool to the table,

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took from its rude shelf his Bible, and for half an hour stumbled among the truths printed in a fat black German text, led not alone by the feeble rays from kerosene, but also by the light that Hans Schneider had thrown on that particular chapter last Sunday from the preacher's desk of what sacrilegious youth of that region freely Englished as the "Double Duckin' Baptism Church House." His devotions over, he soon slept the sleep of tired health of a man not yet forty.

Life had been a somewhat difficult matter for Yakob latterly, as he had not been a Neutäufer many years, and the peculiarities of the sect were such that he was forever stumbling into the sinful tracks of his youth. For instance, four evenings of this very week he had humbled his spirit and added to his weariness for conscience' sake. Monday night, after his work was done, he had walked two miles to an English neighbor's to try to engage work for the harvest, and when the housewife came to the door he had thoughtlessly taken off his hat. This little slip from rectitude worried him all the next day, so again, when evening came, he dragged his weary feet to the same door to say: "Meinen Sie, ich takes mein hut gestern off?"

"No," said the woman, "I did not notice."

"Ya, ya. Das war ein sin. Wir kein honor zu bodies mehr als zu somebodies shows."

Then he went away, but he couldn't sleep, for he had contradicted his neighbor's wife. So once more when evening came he went again and said:

"Ich habe unrecht did. Ich says 'ya,' ven Sie 'nein' says."

On the fourth trip he told the surprised woman that the whole proceeding had been wrong, and that, the misdeed once done, he should not have troubled her further, but have done penance some other way. No wonder he went tired to bed this Friday night.

The next morning, long before the sun had found its way into the forest that crept up close to his little cabin, he was out feeding the pigs, the sway-backed mare and the chickens. This done, he cooked his simple breakfast. Then, putting some bread and bacon into an old lard pail for his noon lunch, he started for the woods. The sweet scents and sounds of the awakening earth as the sun took its first dainty sips of dew were enough to make a poet of

any material except Yakob, but he was not of the stuff of which poets are made. Rather below the average size, he had a round moon face, with a fringe of red beard extending from ear to ear. His nose had an upward tilt and his cheeks were as ruddy as sun, wind and good digestion could paint them. It was just the face for a jolly, joking butcher, and not at all unbecoming for a happy farmer, and its expression was far from that look of intense woe and dejection which it afterwards came to wear, so out of harmony with Nature's evident intention.

As it was, the soft summer zephyrs, threading their way through the needles of the firs, embroidered no flowery pattern on Yakob's mind. He saw in the forest only so many cords of wood that had to be removed by hard labor to make way for the hop-yard that was his dream of prosperity. He knew that it was cool now, that presently it would be hot, and since it was much easier to grub when it was cool, he went immediately to work at the stump he had partly unearthed the day before. The sun rose higher and Yakob, getting limbered up, worked harder and faster. The shadows grew shorter and Yakob hotter, till at last there was no slant at all to the sunlight, by which, and other more intimate signs, he knew it was time to go to the spring where he had left his dinner bucket, and transfer its contents to another receptacle.

His meal was nearly over when the transit of a clumsy sandwich was arrested midway between the bucket and his already open mouth, and mouth and tongue reverted to their now seldom-used faculty of speech. With an expression of pleased surprise, Yakob confided to the solitude:

"Ich hab's alreatty. Ya, ein vomans vill ich hier bringen mit."

With characteristic frugality he did not pursue the subject further with word or mind, for surely one thought was enough for one day. So he placidly finished his dinner and went back to his work, and dug as determinedly as though he expected to find a blushing, buxom frau attached to the tap root.

It was the end of the next week before he got over wondering why the idea had not occurred to him before. In a month's time he had gone so far as to allot to "die voman" a portion of the work — the cooking, making the garden, feeding the pigs, horse and chickens. During the autumn he mentally increased his flock

of chickens and added a cow to his live stock, and "meine vife" was to carry butter and eggs to the market.

By Christmas time he realized that it would be necessary to make a selection, and then, for the first time, his thoughts wandered from the sermon and his eyes from the preacher to that side of the church where the women sat alone, divided from the men, their heads decorously covered with veils or kerchiefs tied under the chin, for is it not written, "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head"? (I Cor. xi; 5.) And so, since these women, with their peaceful, quiet faces, make their lives one long prayer, they are never seen uncovered.

It was a difficult matter for Yakob to make a decision, and his glance moved but slowly down along the rows of unclaimed sisters. At last the choice narrowed down to two — Louisa Blauer and Rosa Meyer. Louisa could be drawn by curves alone — her face by a compass with the tip of her nose as a centre — the nose itself almost lost in the swelling roundness of her cheeks, while her eyes were like two blue buttons in a red upholstered cushion. She needed no artificial aid to increase the convexity of the line from her throat to her waist, itself a circle whose circumference it would be discourteous to disclose. Rosa, on the contrary, was scarcely more corpulent than the handle of the hoe she wielded so vigorously among her father's corn and potatoes — but neither was she as round and smooth as the friction of her hardened hands had rendered it, for her angles were as sharp as its weed-destroying blade. Whatever protuberances were visible beneath her sober-colored calico were more suggestive of osseous formation than of adipose tissue. Both maidens were equally pious and neither had ever been sentenced to sit in the sinners' corner at meeting. Both were good cooks, as he knew by the fare when it had been the Meyers' or the Blauers' turn to bring the dinner for the congregation. Louisa was fairer to look upon, and he would get more for the money invested, but she was slow in her motions, and if it took her as long to make up her mind as he had taken, he would have to make his own garden patch for still another season and continue to cook his own meals and do his chores for many weary months. Though Rosa would be but a thin bargain, she was quick and

energetic and lacked the severity of expression that pervaded Louisa's broad countenance — besides, her father's cabbages were the largest and finest in the neighborhood.

Now Yakob knew full well that the time had come for him, according to Neutäufer requirements, to put the matter into the hands of one of the two preachers, and to trust in them and the Lord. But, from some source — it is difficult to trace evil to its fountain head — perhaps from some bold, dare-devil ancestor, perhaps from the cloven-hoofed one himself or, more likely, from the rosy-winged mischief-maker who finds nothing too dense for his darts — a daring scheme crept insidiously into Yakob's mind and, once there, took complete possession.

"Ein' voman vill ich myself get alreatty," whispered his mind to his conscience, that started back in affright at the enormity of the suggestion. What, break the rules of the church and hold converse with a maiden! In fancy he saw himself banished to the lonesome bench in the sinners' corner during service, eating a solitary meal or, mayhap, lunching with other transgressors, after the pilgrims in the straight path had feasted together; then, without the kiss of brotherhood, moving out from among them all. He shuddered at the thought.

But another picture arose before his mind, the novelty of which cast into forgetfulness the former. In this vision he beheld himself in his new purple shirt and his black coat, driving behind the sway-backed mare to Brother Meyer's gate, from which he could see Rosa, her long body bent towards the earth as her heavy shoe drove the spade into the loamy soil. But when he got thus far the picture always acted as though in a projectoscope and whirled away to make room for one in which he had tied the mare at *Louisa's* gate, had tramped up the neatly kept walk and stood before the generous proportions of Louisa herself as she sat knitting the yarn of her own spinning into beautiful thick scratchy socks. But there was no conversation printed under this picture, and it was soon whisked off and followed by a succession of blanks.

Now, when sin enters into gray matter, no difference how dull its shade, it generally lightens it up with an edge of cunning, and though Yakob's ascent of the heavenly ladder had been slow and tedious, rung by rung, when he began to backslide he attained a

toboggan-like speed that was truly alarming. And so an idea came to him that kept him serenely smiling while the blanks rolled past and showed him the final picture — the interior of the little church on a sunny Sunday! The brothers and sisters he saw in their usual places, but with a look of mild, expectant interest, such as they did not evince for the usual sermon — himself in his purple shirt, and perhaps a green necktie — and Louisa, in a new brown dress and a blue veil tied under her chin, seated in her place beside Rosa. Then he heard Hans Schneider — or it might be Peter Lauer — from the pulpit, asking the questions of the marriage ceremony, and himself replying from his seat and Louisa from hers among the women. Then would come the kissing of the brethren and he would make room for Louisa in the cart and the sway-backed mare, after several efforts, would start them towards home. This last picture became so real in Yacob's mind that he mended one of the tugs with a new piece of rope, that it might stand the strain of the added load.

Yacob now gave himself up entirely to the dictates of the devil. The lusts of life once more so led his soul, despite his "double duckin'," that he even managed to get some tobacco, which he smoked surreptitiously and "chawed" when alone in the woods, taking an unholy delight in renewing his skill in expectorating, an accomplishment of his unregenerate years. As he luxuriously watched the smoke curling from his pipe towards the fir tops, his plan unfolded and elaborated itself till it was ready for execution. It was based on an immense respect for the dollars and the laws of his adopted country. Were they not almighty in dealing with both evil and good? Had he not known the laws of the church itself obliged to give way to the laws of the land? Thus he reasoned that, could he go to Louisa — there was no longer thought of the lean Rosa — armed with the authority of the law, he would be surer of gaining his suit than if he abided by the rules of the church and had Hans Schneider interview the sister.

That is how it came to pass that, one day towards the end of February, the sway-backed mare jogged into the streets of Salem, drawing the rickety cart with its mud-spattered, sin-soiled driver. Yakob had gone with Ferdinand Braun as witness when the latter procured his marriage license, and so knew the amount of

money needed and something about how to go to work to procure the, to his notion, *compelling* document.

Though Yakob realized that he was sinning against the church, he experienced a strange exhilaration that produced a puckering sensation about his lips, from whence there presently issued a jerky whistle in which he groped around for a long forgotten tune. He found it, and then, for a few bars, he sang in gurgling gutturals a wanton song, that his hopes recalled to him:

"Zwei Bits und drei Pennies und ein black pied Kuh,
Dein Fader vill gib mich, venn ich marry du."

As he neared the more populous business streets he checked his unbecoming levity and made straight for the grocery store of Peter Green on Commercial Street, hoping to find that worthy, with whom he had long traded, willing to go to the court house with him as a witness. He found the grocer in front of his little store, doing duty as a sort of signal flag, as his sole purpose seemed to be to inform customers of the state of the weather. He greeted Yacob with a hearty "Wie geht es, Mueller? Fine day, huh! Was kennen Sie?"

Yakob's first care was to carry in the box of eggs he had brought with him to supply the eighty cents he still lacked for his purchase. The eggs having been turned into silver and the oats in which they were packed fed to the mare, Mueller, without circumlocution, broached the object of his trip to town in these words:

"Koom mit mir und Sie kann schwear das ich bin ein Mann alreatty, und dot Louisa Blauer vill meine Frau pe entirely."

Peter arose from the barrel on which he had seated himself and slapped Yakob on the shoulder.

"Ach, mein Sohn! goes it so mit Sie? Das ist sehr gut — das ist pully; haw! haw! Poot oop die peers."

But Yakob, fearing to make any inroads upon his cash in hand until his main object should be attained, ignored the suggestion, and presently they were going toward the court house. As they turned into State Street, a band struck up a lively air. Strange how conscience controls in trifles, even when one is on the way to crimes. At the first strain Yakob clapped his hands over his ears and darted through a hardware shop into the back yard, whence

Peter dragged him, his fingers still in his ears, to shut out the devil's music!

It was with a nervous and indiscriminate "ya" or "nein" that Yakob now replied to the jovial Peter's ponderous jokes on his matrimonial prospects, and all too soon for his waning courage they stood before the clerk's desk.

"Herr Clark, mein freund, Yakob Mueller, who vould a marriage license get," said Peter, indicating Yakob with a wave of his hand.

"Glory ticket, eh?" said the facetious clerk, glancing at Yakob, who shifted uneasily about, grinning sheepishly.

"Well," as he showed no signs of speaking, "isn't Barkis willin'?"

"Ich bin Yakob Mueller, und ich vill Louisa Blauer for meine vife haben. Geben Sie mir ein vedding baper."

He took out his purse and with slow, clumsy fingers counted out two dollars and fifty cents in quarters, dimes and nickels and reluctantly shoved it towards the clerk. It was hard-earned money, and it seemed a good deal to pay out at once, but then, two could earn more than one, and Louisa would soon make it up to him.

The clerk looked it over, glanced up, and said: "You'll have to dig deeper, my boy. Bliss has riz. Tickets up to three dollars. All owing to growing independence of women," he added in explanation, as Yakob stared at him in dismay. "Few buyers now, so we had to come up to pay expenses of keeping office open."

Yakob's face was a study of woe as he showed his empty purse. "Ach, das ist zu viel. Ich hab nodings more."

His distress was so real that the clerk was moved. "Well," he said, "bring me a bucket of kraut in the fall, and we'll call it even."

Yakob fairly beamed: "Ya, ya, das ist vat ich vill."

"And Louisa, is she willing and anxious?" inquired the clerk.

Yakob had never told a lie since his "double duckin,'" and the one now needed stuck in his throat and made his face almost as purple as his Sunday shirt, but Peter came gallantly to the rescue with:

"Ya, ya! Er ist ein pully poy, und Louisa vill him schnell haben."

Finally the dread form was over and they started out, the clerk calling after them: "Kiss the bride for me, and don't forget the sauerkraut."

Yakob thrust the precious document into his pocket. His obviously empty purse disposed of Peter's renewed suggestion to "Poot oop die peers," and mare and man, tired but triumphant, were soon moving countrywards. By driving a mile or so out of his way he could pass Louisa's house on the way home and, since he was now quite sure of her, he resolved to let her know her good fortune at once. It turned out pretty much as in his vision — up to a certain point.

"Come in." It was *her* voice, and her best district-school English.

He opened the door and stood in front of her, just as he had planned. She raised her eyes from her knitting and said: "Good evening, Yakob Mueller."

As no conversational hints had been attached to his dream picture, he let loose the thought that came to him first:

"Die socke ist zu grosz, Louisa," he said with a confident grin, sticking out his muddy boot for her inspection.

It was an unfortunate inspiration. In the first place, the stocking was intended for the maid's own ample wear, and comparisons are odious. Regarded in any light, the remark was flippant — and it called attention to the mud he had tracked in on to her clean floor. She seized the opportunity to retort:

"What do you want, Yakob Mueller? Take your dirty boots out into the barn, if you want to see father."

Yakob shook his head. "Aber, Louisa, dein Fader ich vill marry nicht."

She stared at him in amazement. "What do you mean, stupid?"

"Nein, nein, Louisa, du muss nicht mat pe. It vill kein goot sein. Ich vill Sie für Frau haben."

The clouds on Louisa's brow grew darker as Yakob drew his paper weapon from his pocket and handed it to her, smiling complacently in his perfect faith in its compelling power. Her eyes glanced over it in wonder till she came to her own name. Then the storm broke. No rule of church could stop her now.

"You miserable idiot! What does this mean?" she demanded.

"Da, da, Louischen, eggside nod yourself. De law says ve vill marry."

"Nonsense, I never told you to get this, and Hans Schneider hasn't spoken to me."

"Aber, Louisa, der law ist besser dan Hans Schneider, und dis" (tapping the paper she had indignantly flung back at him) "make him sure. Ve vill marry negst to der negst Sonntag eggsagdly."

The hailstones of the maiden's wrath now fairly peppered him.

"You fool! We'll do nothing of the sort. How dare you break the law of the church? You'll be cast into outer darkness, you — you — *Schuft!* You've been trinking peer alreatty, und I'll tell die Versammlung!"

Her English was getting weak, and she had to stop for breath. He changed his tactics.

"Aber, kleine Louisa, dis baper ich pay zwei und halb tollar für, und Sie vould not vish him vasted."

"What do I care, you snake? Clear out, I tell you."

He began to see that she was neither to be cajoled nor reasoned with, and his anger rose to meet hers. Putting the paper in his pocket he started for the door, stopped, and said:

"Die Piple her say, does one dot resist der law shall haben tamnation." Then, with his hand on the door knob, he turned and swore this fearful oath:

"Py golly! Der scherif vill ich ged. He vill show you vot der law mean."

It was a bold threat, but Yakob meant it. He spluttered and bubbled all the way home, and when, from force of habit, he got down the Bible before going to bed, he wandered around in it aimlessly, like a lost child. But there was one passage that seemed to force itself upon him. If he shut the book, it opened of itself at the same place each time. He did not notice that it was exactly in the middle of the book, where it was stitched, and opened easily, but the significance of the text impressed itself upon him with cumulative force. It was Proverbs, xxv; 24: "It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house." He could not but see that there was fate in it. Though Yakob's intellect was not of the keenest, it was clear, even to him, that life with Louisa would not be all skittles

and beer, or, if so, that he would be the skittle-pin and Louisa the ball that would knock him endwise.

Still, if he must give up the sheriff idea, and with it Louisa, he would at any rate try to recover his unluckily invested money. So the next day the sway-backed mare turned her discouraged head once more toward Salem. There were no eggs to take this time, no call to be made on Peter Green, no wanton whistling puckered Yakob's lips. With uncertainty depicted in every line of his figure and a nondescript expression on his face, he slid into the clerk's office and waited until that individual looked up and, at sight of yesterday's applicant, called out:

"Hello, Barkis! Where's the kraut? Is Louisa waiting outside? Great Scott, man, you don't look like a bridegroom! What's up? Is marriage a failure?"

"Hier ist das baper, und ich do nod vish Louisa. Ich vish mein zwei und halb dollar back again alreatty."

"Holy smoke! You do, do you? What's wrong? Had a slip 'twixt cup and lip? Take my advice and patch it up, my son. Make her jealous, and she'll soon come to time."

"Nein, nein. Ich vill mein dollars haben."

"The deuce you will. We don't do it that way. Come, tell me all about it — wouldn't she have you?"

"Die Piple her say, 'Es ist besser on die top haus entirely to lib, dan in der videst room mit eine zänkische Weibe.' Ich vish Louisa nicht. Ich vill mein zwei und halb dollar haben."

"Well, if Louisa's that jawbreaker on the end of your Scripture, I don't know but you're wise. But it's no use, my boy — I can't give you back your tin."

"Ach, Himmel! Sie vill nicht? Den you pe no besser dan shteal. Hier ist das baper — wo ist mein dollars?"

The clerk was getting tired. He picked up the license, tossed it into the waste basket, and said:

"Come, clear out. I'm busy."

Yakob moved obediently toward the door and passed slowly out. Then he remembered a comforting and appropriate malediction from one of the minor prophets — Malachi, iii; 9: "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" — and, opening the door again called out, in a voice choking

with rage and disappointment, this astonishing version of the text:

"Die Piple says, 'You pe tamned mit ein tam, für du hast shtealed mich, ya, dis ganz United Staates!"

Nearly all day Yakob hung around the corridors, unable to screw up his courage to make another effort. Towards evening the frequenters of the court house missed him, and went home and told their wives and sweethearts of the queer little Dutchman whose girl had gone back on him.

Whether in this way the episode came to the knowledge of the elders of the "Versammlung," whether Yakob confessed or Louisa told, does not appear, for the church trial was secret, but it is certain that he would have been expelled outright had his remorse not been so genuine and his suffering from the pangs of conscience so evident.

But his punishment was heavier even than expulsion. He was condemned to sit in solitary misery on the bench in the sinners' corner of the little "Double Duckin' Baptism Church House" in the woods. Sunday after Sunday he sits there, alone. The sermon drones on to a close, but not once does he lift his eyes from the floor. When the pious congregation all kneel in prayer, his very attitude is eloquent of self-condemnation and abasement. He could not appear more crushed were he held responsible for all the sin in the world. When, at the close of the final hymn, the brethren exchange the kiss of brotherly love in parting, he stands dejected and apart. No one kisses him, no one notices him, except one of the younger sisters, who gives him a sly glance, almost of derision.

Alone he moves down the aisle and out to the shed and mounts his two-wheeled cart. The sway-backed mare jogs along the road and Yakob slowly disappears, his head sunk upon his breast, his body swaying with the motion of the cart. And somehow, as he gets farther and farther away, the sunlight seems to brighten and a cloud of gloom to melt away.

A Salvage Case.*

BY W. B. HAYWARD.

CAPTAIN CULTOR, of the British tramp steamer *Blenheim*, had been well brought up, nautically speaking. Hands more accustomed to the tying of reef points than of apron strings had led him since boyhood along the true path of sea-righteousness, setting up and tautening the strands of his character until, like springy, well-seasoned rigging, it could gently but firmly bear any strain that might be put upon it. He had also learned in a practical way something about the chastening and hardening influences of the knotted end of a piece of manila rope.

In the light of such training there was no obvious reason why Captain Cultor should have developed a startling amount of sentiment. And, to tell the truth, he hadn't; that is, he wouldn't admit that he had, which is nearly the same thing. Yet, strange to relate, he sat quietly in his cabin and gazed intently, if not wistfully, at the photograph of a girl which he had just taken out of his desk. This was nothing in itself. Any other man with an eye for beauty would have done the same thing; but perhaps another fellow would not have sighed at the sight of the picture. This Captain Cultor did, and it altered the case entirely. It is true that he checked himself before he finished, but it was a sigh for all that, and one which encompassed a world of meaning.

A highly imaginative and romantic person would have at once concluded that this sailor had, somewhere in his travels, encountered a hurricane of love, the choked-off sigh being but a part of the ground swell of emotion which naturally followed the tempest. Such a conclusion would have been correct, for Captain Cultor had long since run out of the doldrums of heart-wholeness into the furies of the tender passion. It was rather unfortunate that he

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should have struck the furies instead of the trade winds, for this made the sailing more difficult; but to a man of five-and-twenty, no matter how strong his character may be, love rarely comes in gentle puffs.

It happened, as most love cases happen, in quite a natural and not altogether inexplicable manner. It differed only from the ordinary in one respect — the way it matured. In reality it didn't mature; it simply came out of the blue like a white squall and carried away the rigging of two hearts, so that they both fell together, a tangled mass of wreckage.

After recounting the facts it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise. The *Blenheim* was lying beside a Brooklyn dock, undergoing repairs. At an opposite pier, with two hundred feet of unobscured vision between the vessels, lay the schooner *American Eagle*, owned and commanded by Jabez Haines. Captain Haines was not a pleasing man in the full sense of the word; he had followed the sea too long. Even his best friends admitted that. His enemies called him a selfish, sour, crotchety sea-dog, but they were illiberal in their views; for how can forty years of salt air and very salt "horse" produce meekness of spirit and sweetness of temper?

But whatever people thought of Captain Haines, not one person could say that he did not love his ship. The *Eagle* was his god, his religion and his daily bread. He worshiped the *Eagle*, would have died for the *Eagle*, and the *Eagle* — well, she was a vessel, and did not understand. But she never left port with empty hatches.

The second place in Captain Haines's affections was held by Sally. What her father lacked in physical beauty — and it was a good deal — Sally more than made up by her own personal charms; and what her father lost by his roughness, Sally gained by her gentleness. In short, Sally was an unaffected, lovable girl, quite unversed in the ways of the world, but possessing a ready appreciation that enabled her to grasp new conditions without effort.

Sally's life aboard the *Eagle* was not exciting, to say the least. To the laborers on the dock it appeared to be a continual round of sewing. Her favorite seat was in the after companion-way, and there she worked day in and day out, apparently oblivious to all that went on around her.

Now, at least one person knew that too much sewing is apt to weaken the eyes, especially eyes that show light in the dark and dark in the light. An altruistic person was this, and he concentrated his gaze on the figure in the companion-way. It was a rude thing to do, very rude indeed, but it saved Sally's eyesight; for one day she looked up to see a good-natured face watching her from the *Blenheim's* bridge. Sally blushed, she couldn't help it; the person with the good-natured face shifted his position half a point but didn't look in the least uncomfortable. This was natural, as the rope's end had taught him never to become flustered when two bright lights shone out dead ahead.

It may have been a coincidence, or it may not; at any rate, the same thing occurred the next day and the day after that. Finally, it began to occur several times daily, and then, suddenly, the phenomena, or whatever it may be called, developed into something more than sidelong glances.

Some one has said that love finds the way; and indeed it does. Sally and Cultor met without the necessary formal introductions. How the meeting was arranged can only be surmised; to all appearances it just occurred. Prudent people will be justly shocked at this, but Sally and Cultor had not been brought up to view conventional questions from the landsman's standpoint. The ethics of the sea are strict. First they teach the mariner to get his bearings; after that, he is supposed to make his port, if possible, without the aid of a pilot. Now, Cultor had got his bearings in something more than sidelong glances; he saw his port in Sally; accordingly, he steamed ahead at full speed. He simply did his duty as he saw it.

There are two kinds of love at sea. The first gathers slowly, and can be watched in all its phases; the second strikes as suddenly as slant lightning and breaks down the barriers of shyness and reserve in a moment. Cultor and Sally had to deal with the latter variety and they did not shrink from their task.

It was therefore not extraordinary that this meeting led to four very natural things — the discovery of mutual friends; an exchange of confidences; a kiss implanted on a soft, round cheek, and the appearance of Sally's father just as the latter was consummated.

The skipper of the *Eagle* was ordinarily a gale, but when aroused

he resembled a screeching cyclone. It was very unfortunate that he arrived at the critical moment. So quickly did things happen that Cultor, to this day, has but a vague notion of what really occurred. He remembered a shrill scream from Sally and recognized the brutal touch of a belaying pin as it came in contact with his head. Then — chaos.

A kind watchman found the battered skipper groping in the dark and took him aboard the *Blenheim*. When Cultor reached deck a few days later he looked vainly for the *Eagle*. A sailor told him, with a smile, that the schooner had sailed two days after his accident.

"Accident," muttered Cultor feelingly, "it was more like a catastrophe. But I'll get square, and I'll get Sally, too."

Then he went below to open some letters which had accumulated during his illness. Cultor sorted the envelopes indifferently until he came to a bulky package, evidently addressed by a feminine hand. He opened this quickly, and between layers of court plaster and soft cotton he found a photograph of Sally, taken as she sat in the companion-way, with this inscription on the back:

DEAR ——:

I hope you were not seriously hurt. The *Eagle* sails to-morrow; perhaps we shall meet again.

SALLY.

P. S. I thought the plaster and cotton might be useful. S.

It was a rather crude message, but it made Cultor's heart flap like a mainsail. Then he laughed aloud. "By Jove," he exclaimed, "I forgot to tell her my first name."

The *Blenheim* had logged many a knot and made many a port since then, but the fortune of the sea had never allowed her to fall in with the *Eagle*. This was a sad state of affairs. Nevertheless, Cultor was philosophical. If he couldn't have Sally in person, he at least could look at her picture, leaving his imagination to do the rest. Sometimes his imagination raced like a screw out of water and caused him to see visions of a vine-covered cottage with a trim figure standing in the doorway, ready to welcome him after a long voyage. At other times it jammed, as a rope in a block

sometimes does. Then he sighed — a weak thing for a man to do who acknowledged no sentiment in his make-up. He had just emitted one of these not-intended-to-be-sentimental sighs, when a knock came at his door.

"Flare light on the port quarter," reported a burly, oil-skin clad figure, "looks like a ship in distress."

"Watch it closely, I'll be up in a moment," replied the skipper, hastily slipping the photograph into the desk.

When Cultor reached the bridge he found a chill, drizzling rain beating down upon the black sea. Not a star was visible, and the *Blenheim* seemed to him a wet, shadowy ghost feeling its way through the low-flying scud.

"A nasty night," remarked the chief officer, "but it's gradually clearing. There's the light, sir — now it's gone again."

Cultor watched intently. Presently the light appeared again, this time remaining stationary for a few seconds. By its fitful gleam the Captain could distinguish the faint outlines of several figures huddled together under the lee of the cabin. She was a small vessel, dismasted and apparently water-logged. At times the sea enveloped her entirely, and she was lost to view; but she would rise after each drenching, shake herself like a dog, and wallow in the green again — a helpless yet buoyant hulk.

"We can do nothing to-night but stand by," said Cultor to the officer. "Send up a rocket; that'll cheer 'em up a bit."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The night passed slowly to those on the storm-tossed craft, but the morning sun rose bright and warm on a sea that had lost much of its angry curl. Cultor had early ordered a boat away to the wreck, and the message that came back made his heart thump louder than the engines.

"It's the schooner *American Eagle*, lumber laden, and her captain wants you to tow her, sir," shouted the officer in the boat.

"Has he got a lady with him?" shouted back Cultor.

"Yes, his daughter, and she wants to leave the vessel."

"Then tell him I'll take all hands aboard the *Blenheim*, but I won't tow his schooner."

"He says he won't abandon his ship."

Cultor was unprepared for such obstinacy.

"Tell him he must leave her," he replied, "and tell him — well — it's coming on to blow again and I won't risk my ship for his."

"That ought to fetch him," muttered Cultor as he watched the boat making for the schooner.

After some delay — it seemed an age to the skipper — the little craft came back with the shipwrecked crew. Cultor helped Sally over the rail and took her below. Yes, it was the same Sally, a bit wet and chilled, but with the same bewitching eyes and simple manner. The skipper wrapped her tenderly (I say it advisedly, for was he not a man devoid of sentiment?) in his big coat and went on deck to perform another duty. Approaching Captain Haines, he said: "Do you remember a night on a Brooklyn dock two years ago?"

The old skipper nodded and wondered what was coming.

"I swore at the time to get square," continued Cultor fiercely.

"You've deserted your ship — she's a derelict. Suppose that I were to tow her to port and claim salvage. What would you say to that?"

Captain Haines was speechless — he knew he was in a trap. Finally, he blurted out: 'Waal, it wouldn't be sea etiquette, but I guess you'd get the ship." "And," he mumbled to himself, "that is the end of the *Eagle*, the only thing I love 'cept Sally. I'd sooner gone down with her first."

"We might compromise," suggested Cultor in softer tones. "We're just two hundred miles from Sandy Hook. Suppose that I were to tow the *Eagle* to within twenty-five miles of the coast, and then put you and your crew aboard her. Do you think you could take her into port without anybody knowing that I'd helped you?"

"Just trust me," said the old man brightly.

"And what could I expect in the way of salvage?" asked Cultor.

"I haven't forgotten Brooklyn, you know," replied Captain Haines. "You might claim Sally; that is, if she doesn't object."

BUILDING FOR OLD AGE

Children particularly need food containing the elements that make the soft gray matter in the nerve cells and in brain.

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